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NARRATIVE
OF THE
MILITARY LIFE
OF

MAJOR THOMPSON MAXWELL
OF MASSACHUSETTS.

1757—1820.

Gleason, Benjamin

A REMARKABLE MILITARY LIFE.

Communicated by WILLIAM WILLDER WHEILDON, Esq., of Concord, Mass.

MAJOR THOMPSON MAXWELL was born in Bedford, Mass., and may almost be said to have passed his life on the field of battle, "born and brought up as a soldier." Like the memorable George Washington, he entered military service when he was a boy. Washington was born in 1732, and Maxwell in 1742, and both entered the service of the country when about fourteen or fifteen years of age; both were in the French and Indian wars and the war of the American Revolution. Maxwell enlisted in a company of Rangers in 1757, and served in the various campaigns until 1763; was in the Revolutionary war from 1775 to 1779; was in the Shays Rebellion in 1787; and also served in the second war with England, in 1812, and remained in the army until 1819, latterly as barrack master at Detroit. He was also in civil life, a member of the Massachusetts Convention which framed the State Constitution in 1780, and was a representative in the Legislature from the town of Buckland, afterwards residing in Ohio. He visited Massachusetts in 1821, and was still living in 1833, near Detroit, 90 years of age. The following narrative was dictated to, and written by Mr. Benjamin Gleason in 1820-21.

MAJOR THOMPSON MAXWELL.

His father's name was Hugh Maxwell, born in or near Belfast, Ireland, 1699, and died in Massachusetts, March 19, 1759, by a fall from his horse, aged 60 years. His mother was born in 1693, and died in 1769, six years older, and lived ten years longer than his father.

There were five sons and two daughters, viz. William, Margaret, Sarah, Hugh, James (born at Mystic), Benjamin (born at Woburn), and Thompson (born at Bedford, Mass.). Thompson M., the youngest son, born (the 50th year of his mother) Sept 11, O. S., or 22, N. S., 1742, and lived at home with his parents till the spring of 1757.

In May or June, 1757, Capt. Nehemiah Lovell, of Dunstable, raised a company of Rangers, for the protection of the frontiers against the French and Indians. They were called the Provisional Rangers, whole number 700, under Gen. Amherst, at Lake Champlain. Active and patriotic, Thompson Maxwell enlisted, and (using his own words) our march was to Pennycook (now Concord, N. H.), Pigwacket Pond (now Lovells), in Fryeburg, Me. Scoured the woods to Connecticut River, near to White River, Vt. We there reconnoitered to No. 4 (now Charlestown, N. H.), which three days before was burned, subsisting on wild game, until we reached No. 4, for

nine days. Thence to Hinsdale, Brattleboro', etc., including one day's march above No. 4 to Black River, from White River to Connecticut River, and at No. 4 again. Twenty or twenty-five of us finally return via Walpole, Keene and Swanzy, to Winchester, Fitchburg, Groton, etc., home.

1758. In April, enlist in Capt. Lovell's company for eight months. Rendezvous at Fort Edward. Thence to Deerfield; up Deerfield River to Rice's Fort, in Charlestown; over the mountains to Adams and Williamstown, to Fort Hawks. Major Hawks and his whole party prisoners. Get provisions; up the Hoosac River to within ten miles of Bennington; cross to Troy, to Half Moon Fort (now Waterford), on Mohawk River. To Fort Edward again, Gen. Abercrombie in command (strict and severe), with 4000 British, 3000 Provincials and 700 Rangers, besides Frazer's Scotch Regiments, with their kilts, plaids, etc. We reconnoitre from Fort Edward to Fort George, and E. of lake George to the Bluffs, 15 miles, when the Indians attack the first day in a body; second day scatteringly and the third day are dispersed. We then arrive at Fort Ann. While Major Rogers's party are shooting at a mark, after breakfast, Major Putnam with his battalion moves for Fort Edward. At two miles advance we are ambushed, and fight hard for six hours, from 10 till 4 o'clock. The brave Major P. made prisoner and suffering greatly after his capture. Fifty-eight killed, 84 wounded in the conflict. The firing is heard at Fort Edward. In the evening recruits came with carts to bear off the dead, and the wounded borne on the back or biers to the fort. We remained ten days at Fort Edward, and the army then moves to Fort George. In August, we cross Lake George to Sabbath Day Point. Sunday had an action; the boats returned to Fort George; the army advance to Ticonderoga. Lord Howe and Gen. Abercrombie order a reconnoitre along the Indian trails. A sergeant, a corporal, and three or four men of our scouting party, arranged six or eight rods apart, directed by occasional whistling, move cautiously through the woods; but the Indians watchfully waylay, and unseen, fire upon us, killing the corporal and file-leader, and we are compelled to retreat. Hurrying over a hill, I am met abruptly by two Indians, who give chase for a mile, when at a breathing pause, with deliberate aim, I kill one and leave the other logg'd; then meeting the sergeant, he swims the outlet with me holding on by his shoulders, and then arrive safe at the fort. September, the attack: Tyconderoga stormed; loss 1500. October at Fort Edward; December home.

1759. Enlist eight months with Capt. Samuel Brewer of Waltham. May, to Fort Edward. June, on a scout. In an action at Roger's Rock (40 feet high, W. of Lake George), we lose thirty men. Retreat to Fort George, and have a hard fight at landing. To Tyconderoga, and thence to Crown Point. Find both evacuated. Engage in building boats, etc. December, to St. Francis, Rogers commanding. Lose all our blankets, etc. Massacre and burning. Surprisals frequent by the enemy. Seventy of us under Gen. Stark to No. 4. Realize great suffering; thirty-seven die, the rest surviving various hardships. Get safe at home at last.

1760. Enlist with Capt. Barnes of Chelmsford. May, with Capt. Brewer at Crown Point. Rangers scouting. Often engaged in skirmishing, etc. September, the army take boats and pass to Isle au Noir. Here a siege of eleven days and fighting. To Chamblie an action; to St. Johns. 20th of October, to Montreal. Gen. Murray from Quebec, Gen. Amherst (1758 at Louisburg) from the Lakes, and Gen. Howland from the south, are now with us. Colors flying, drums beating, drills and camp

display in martial splendor. Montreal surrenders. October, Canada ceded to the English. 1000 men remain; one regiment of 800 men winter 20 miles above Montreal. We go to Detroit; the ice runs late, and we contend with many hardships and have soldiers fare.

1761. September, arrive at Detroit. The last of October, 250 of us go to Mackinaw, and make winter quarters, to protect the N. W. company's goods. So engaged, the season in garrison duties until the spring.

1762. In May, crossed Lake Superior to the N. West; Grand Portage. In August, to Mackinaw. In September, to Detroit, variously engaged, hither and thither during the year.

1763. In the spring go to Chicago and return, reconnoitering by land, etc. In the summer, Pontiac and 3000 Indians make a dreadful massacre at Mackinaw, by a stratagem of playing ball,—thrown in and out the garrison,—until they get free and familiar access to the fort; allaying all suspicion and pretending only amusement and good faith; then raising the war-whoop, they make a general rush! 200 British and their families all slaughtered! An awful calamity, and unknown abroad until after the arrival and retreat of Pontiac and his Indian warriors; in August, at Detroit. At this time there was in the Detroit garrison about 800 British and 170 Rangers. Councils were held. A delay of ten days making preparations; an Indian woman favored in the traffic of elk skins and moccasins, betrayed Pontiac's secret designs of another massacre; 36 warriors were admitted to the garrison, under a strong guard, for a talk, and their treachery exposed, by throwing aside their blankets, each one concealing a loaded shot gun. They were urged to peace, and required to depart forthwith; but Pontiac revengeful, the whooping and fighting continued for two or three days, so fiercely that the pickets were often on fire. Meanwhile a sloop of war, carrying 16 guns, Capt. Palding, with stores (Adam Brown interpreter), arrives. Slowly moving up river in a calm, the Indians take fright at the vessel's cannon and leave Detroit. In a moment of bravado, Maj. Gladden and Capt. Deil, with 550 volunteer troops pursued, following their boats up to Bloody Bridge, fearless of their warlike appearance, the brandishing of their tomahawks, carbines, etc., but the Indians landing, fight a desperate battle with us, give us no quarter, and our adventurers are repulsed with great slaughter and loss. Of 400 British and 150 Rangers, 170 British and 70 Rangers only return to garrison. November, the Treaty of Peace received. In '59, Maj. Gen. Wolfe and Lieut. Gen. Amherst had command of the British and American forces. The attack and conquest of Quebec, in September, Gen. Wolfe slain. In '60, the whole province of Canada surrendered to Gen. Amherst, and was confirmed to Great Britain by the treaty of 1763, British and American forces occupying Tyconderoga, Montreal and Quebec, etc.

In November, 1763, obtained my dismissal and went home. Married Sybel Wyman, being then 22 years old, and she 27 years old. We lived together 38½ years. In May, '64, lived at Milford, then at Amherst, N. H., farming, teaming, etc., until 1775. Moved to Buckland, Mass., in 1779. My children were: Hugh, James (in Ohio), Joshua (in New York), Thompson (in New York), and Betsey. In 1802, my first wife died. In 1807, married the widow of Capt. Little of New Jersey, and she died in 1813, leaving one son in Ohio. Residence in Ohio, Butler County, town of Madison, called the "Brush Estate." [These notes were taken 12 years since, and Major M. has since married again, to a widow of Michigan Territory, and been occupied in farming, etc., at his present home somewhere in the

neighborhood of Detroit; if now (1833) living, he is at the advanced age of nearly 91 years.] His narrative continues:

In 1773, December 16, was in Boston, when the tea was thrown overboard. Seventy-three spirited citizen volunteers, in the costume of Indians, in defiance of Royal authority, accomplished the daring exploit. John Hancock was then a merchant. My team was loaded at his store near Faneuil Hall, for Amherst, N. H., and put up to meet in consultation at his house at 2 o'clock P.M. The business was soon planned and executed. The patriots triumphed. 1774-5, at Amherst, the country alarmed. Volunteers enrolled, minute-men raised, etc. Arms collected, soldiers kept on drill, alarms frequent, all much engaged.

1775, April 18. Happened at Boston, with my team, and that evening to Bedford, at Capt. Wilson's (my brother-in-law), and concluded to stay. The team sent home to Amherst, N. H. The Provincial Congress at Concord [adjourned 15th]. Messrs. Hancock and Sam Adams at Lexington. Lieut. Col. Smith and Maj. Pitcairn, with 900 British regulars met the alarmed colonists at Lexington, 19th, and then to Concord, destroying stores, arms, etc. At the bridge opposed by Capts. Davis, Buttrick, Wilson, etc. with about 500 men. The British retreat and are met by Lt. Percy's recruit of 4 or 500 British, with two field pieces at Lexington, the Americans following them to Charlestown. This day Capt. Wilson killed. The report of Americans killed 50, and wounded 70. Of the British 65 killed, 180 wounded, 25 prisoners, probably much larger number. Our company from Amherst, N. H., under Capt. Crosby (my rank Lieut.), arrive, and soon 2000 troops are assembled at Cambridge. Gen. Ward commanding.

June 16. Col. Reed's regiment stationed at Charlestown Neck. Putnam, Heath, Prescott, etc., on Bunker Hill. In the evening walk on the hill with Capt. Reed. My brother, Col. Hugh Maxwell, engineer, and about 1000 men at work. I drive stakes. June 17, engaged in action, and retreat to Winter Hill, Gen. Sullivan of New Hampshire, commanding.

July 3d. Gen. Washington arrived at Cambridge. The last of August went with a select number of volunteers to Hog Island and brought off cattle, sheep, horses, etc. Soon after a Br. sloop of war got aground in Mystic River, having 12 guns and a guard of 16 men. A small party of us made an attack; 10 of them escaped in the boat, and we took 6 prisoners, and burned the vessel. Gen. Putnam now commanding [at Winter Hill] with about 5000 men.

1776. March 17. Boston is evacuated by the British. 20th, we march to Boston. 22d, to Mendon. 24th, to Providence, and so on to New Haven, and in vessels to New York. April 11, arrive; our number 4000 troops. April 18, with Gen. Sullivan's brigade of 4000 men, leave New York city for Albany. Thence to Lake George, Tyconderoga, Crown Point, St. Johns, River Sorel, etc., to Trois Riviere, Gen. Thomas commanding. The last of May, we arrive and have a battle at Trois Riviere, Guy Carleton commanding the British. In June, to Montreal, under Col. Reed (Gens. Sullivan, Arnold, etc.), to La Chine. To Jesus Isle to capture Church's party. To Montreal (in three hours), pass by Arnold and cross ferry; on to St. Johns. Capt. Oliver joins Gen. Sullivan; the number of troops about 5000-2000 active. To Isle au Noire (the small pox prevailing). I chance in the near transportation and am ordered on to Crown Point and thence to Tyconderoga, until November. Gen. Sullivan's brigade now commanded by Gen. Gates, and Col. Reed's regiment, ordered to the south to join Gen. Washington, west of Delaware River. In Novem-

ber, we move to Albany; thence to Esopus (60 m.) to Delaware River, and in Pennsylvania, via Bethlehem.

December 14th, arrive and join Gen. Washington at Newtown, opposite Trenton, N. J., 30 miles from Philadelphia. Here until Christmas. December 26, to Trenton. An action; 1500 Americans take over 1100 Hessians and recross to Newtown. The prisoners sent to Philadelphia, Dec. 31, to Trenton.

1777, January 1, south side of the creek, breaking ground under Col. Nixon, with 400 men. New Years day at dark, Washington's artillery drives Cornwallis back from the bridge, fires during the night. 2d, to Princeton—the action—3000 Americans 2500 British. The American army in two divisions, Gen. W. commanding 1500, and Gen. Green 1500 men. Gen Washington and 1500 men to Brunswick, thence to Morristown; in winter quarters. Last of January 90 waggons of the British taken. Foraging, &c. The last of February at Raritan River; a fight with the British foragers—a drawn battle. The last of March, in Col. Reed's brigade to New York. Thence to Tyconderoga and join Gen. St. Clair in June. In July, Gen. Burgoyne drives the Americans to New York State. A battle with the British rear guard at Hubbardstown. The action at Saratoga and Bemis Heights: Gates against Burgoyne—supposed more than 20,000 troops engaged, that is 10,000 Americans against 10,000 English. The Americans final triumphant victory!

August 16, go to Bennington, Vt., Col. Baum commanding the British regulars; the action and their defeat. Gen. Stark took upward of 500 Hessians; more than 200 killed. I am now with 36 men acting as Lieutenant to Gates. Sept. 19, the British attempted to turn our left wing, in order to pass to Albany. Reinforcements and a general engagement—one piece of artillery three times taken and retaken. October 7, the action this day, the British were conquered. Oct. 17, surrender of Burgoyne. Grand military display. Resigned and returned home.

1778. In the spring engage in another campaign, as Captain of Rangers. We march to Saratoga. Gen. Stark commander on the North and Mohawk Rivers, entrusted with the defence of the northern frontier at Cherry Valley. Col. Willett acting against Sir John Johnson at Albany. Hendrick (a friendly Indian) opposing Brandt (a half blood Indian) from Dartmouth College—a Colonel and chief of the Mohawks. At Stone Arabia with 600 Americans, ranging, etc. Our company is thus variously engaged, skirmishing, foraging, pressing the enemy, etc., in a cheerless year's adventures. December return home.

1779. In April to Saratoga; May or June to Cherry Valley to join Gen. Sullivan. Down the Susquehannah to Tyoga Point, etc. July, opposing Butler and Brandt, with the Six Nations at Hogback, Chenango Co. etc. At Queen Catherine town; the old Indian Queen saved. Corn destroyed and an orchard of 1000 trees, at Geneva. August, at Genesee. November, the company of Rangers, 50 men, dismissed at Saratoga; resign and return home. Move to Buckland, Mass., Hampshire County, and continue residence there for twenty years to A.D. 1800. Then go to Ohio, Madison County.

1780. A member of the Massachusetts Convention to frame a Constitution of government—and have been a representative to Boston five or six times during my residence at Buckland, before removing to Ohio.

In 1787, as Captain in the militia oppose Daniel Shays and the insurgents, at Springfield, under Gen. Shepherd, who finally quells the insurrection.

Our company at South Hadley; Shays at Pelham. Gen. Lincoln with 500 men from Boston pursues him to Petersham—he escapes to Canada.

1788. The Federal Constitution ratified. In 1800 to Ohio. 1802, my wife died. [At this time Mr. Maxwell was in possession of a good farm, many cattle, etc., and in 1807, in the autumn, married a second wife at Detroit, who died in February, 1813. He continued his farming and military service, and, in 1811, was in the battle of Tippecanoe, Gen. Harrison commanding the United States troops.]

April, 1812. Engaged in raising troops. "The Prophet" collecting forces, Gen. Hull in command with troops at Dayton, Ohio; my residence thirty miles distant. In May, went to Dayton, as Major, in United States service; guide the troops through to Detroit. Col. Miller joins Hull, when about 50 miles advanced. Return home one week. July 4, arrive at Detroit with Capt. Robertson and others. July 30, at Canard's Bridge. Brock and Proctor, the Charlotte sloop-of-war and 700 British troops. To oppose the enemy were Miller 300, Findley 500, Detachments 400, Michigan militia 400—say 1500 or 1600 men, with a month's provisions and three weeks ammunition. August 9, at Brownstone, Miller, Snelling, Cass, McArthur, etc. August 16, Hull surrendered. September, to Cleaveland, a prisoner of war, with about 100 of sick and wounded. October, home to Ohio. Here a mob, irritated by Hull's pusillanimity, misjudging my patriotic efforts, and denouncing all parties concerned in the late disasters at Detroit, rally and gather about my habitation, burn my house, destroy my property, and, barely clothed, I escape for my life through a corn-field by night, from the danger and the ruins. I then go on to Upper Sandusky, join Gen. Harrison destined to the Rapids of the Maumee. Fort Meigs, etc., rebuilt; and until the following March, I am uncertain of being exchanged.

1813. February 25, I return home to Dr. Little's, at Madison, in low health. Threatening letters are received, and to avoid danger I journey about Ohio to Cincinnati. In March, I visit friends, make settlements and am advised to leave the army. I was unjustly accused by Capt. Robinson, as a dangerous enemy and a tory, etc., in Hull's surrender. June, to Cleveland with Col. Jessup, and to Buffalo. July, join Miller at Fort George. In August, Gen. Wilkinson takes command. October, moved to French Mills, to St. Lawrence River, etc., and now, October, 1813, a prisoner of war at the advanced age of 71 years.

1814, March. To Plattsburg; April, at Lacole Mill, opposite Isle au Noir, a foraging master, ordered to join Gen. Brown at Erie, and go on the 1st of July. August 25, the battle of Bridgewater, Gen. Brown commanding with Miller, Jessup, Scott, Ripley, etc. 1st Brigade to Erie. September, I am wounded. The British cannonading; the Americans opposing. Gen. Gaines commanding; Gen. Miller commanding 500 men. Sept. 17, took the batteries; the sortie of Erie. Sept. 30, settlements. Oct. 1, 1814, foraging. Incidentally falling in with 25 British horsemen on a scout, in consequence of some robbery I am taken prisoner at Erie, and carried to Fort George, thence to Little York and Kingston, by land; thence in boats to Lachine; thence marched to Montreal, to Trois Riviere and Quebec. Nov. 29, in close jail.

1815. Realize many hardships in my 73d year. Capt. Deman friendly to me and the prisoners. March 19, exchanged. Thence in carryalls, etc., carried within 25 miles of Plattsburg and join Gen. Brown. In May, to Sackett's Harbor; on furlough to New York, Ballstown, etc. In July,



barrack master for Detroit; with Gen. Miller to Buffalo, and in August again arrive at Detroit, building the cantonment, which is finished in December, and thus variously engaged.

1816, '17, '18, '19, during these years with the troops. In the winter of 1819, the office of barrack master is abolished. Then, as engineer, work upon the roads from Detroit to the river Raisin, 36 miles, and thence 30 miles more to the Rapids—say in all about 70 miles.

During the two last summers' residence at Detroit, receive Captain's pay, \$240 pension, with the rank of Major. The natural infirmity of years excepted, at the age of 77, have general good health, a firm step, active habits, temperate and unbroken faculties, ardent patriotism, industrious disposition, an honest mind and a grateful heart; still in the enjoyment of social interests, estimable friendships and the constant duties of devotion. A long and useful life.

1820, November. Leave Detroit and visit friends in New York and to Boston. 1821, January and February, visiting at Boston and vicinity, through Massachusetts. During the year to New York, to Ohio and again to Detroit, etc.

1833, January. Maj. Maxwell is believed to be still living in his pleasant family connections near Detroit, past 90 years of age, honored by his compatriots, esteemed by his associates, beloved by his relatives and greatly respected by all his fellow citizens; happy in his reflections on a very active and useful life, having a competence for all the wants of his declining years, and very happy in the pleasures of society, the reward of government and the glory of his country.

It will be seen that Maj. Maxwell was present at some consultation had by the tea party in Boston, in 1773; was engaged in the Concord fight on the 19th of April, 1775, and was present with his brother at the work and battle of Bunker Hill. A portrait of Maj. Maxwell, by the artist Greenwood, was among others in the New England Museum in Boston, some years ago, and is probably still preserved. A sketch of the life of his brother Hugh, and of his military experiences, was published some time ago in pamphlet form.

The above narrative is transcribed from an old time-worn manuscript, re-copied by Mr. Gleason, in January, 1833, of which he says: "These notes were copied hastily many years since for personal satisfaction (he being a relative by marriage), but furnishing a memorial of engagements, vicissitudes and events, so extraordinary, connected with one human life, and some among the most important in our national history, it is thought expedient to gratify anxious patriotic friends with a transcript for publication." But, it is believed, they have never been published. He suggests that there may possibly be some mistakes of names or dates, which the reader is asked to excuse, if any are found.

W. W. W.

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